

The Small Scale Syndrome: Career perspectives of Maltese and Gozitan secondary school students

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Abstract: The ‘Small Scale Syndrome’ is a model meant to conceptualise the experiences of Monopoly, Intimacy, Totality and Emigration by the inhabitants of small, often island, states and territories. This study uses the Small Scale Syndrome as a tool to investigate the career perspectives of students living in the archipelago of Malta, the smallest country in the European Union. Data was gathered through 321 questionnaires answered by students attending two state secondary schools, one on the island of Gozo and another one on the island of Malta. Results highlight the higher level of awareness of Monopoly of students living in Gozo when compared to their peers living in Malta. The study captures the higher assimilation of Intimacy/ Totality of students with only Maltese citizenship when compared to those with dual or foreign citizenship. Besides, this study also points out the greater inclination towards Emigration of students with dual or foreign citizenship when compared to their peers with only Maltese citizenship. The Small Scale Syndrome appears to be more strongly related to citizenship than to whether one resides in Malta or in Gozo, indicating that it might be affected by the level of social integration of the students under consideration. The study also suggests that the root causes of Monopoly may differ from those of Intimacy/ Totality and Emigration.

Keywords: career perspectives, Gozo, intimacy, Malta, migration, monopoly, students, small scale, small state, totality.

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Introduction and rationale

Career perspectives and aspirations may influence individuals’ career trajectories and predict future occupational attainment (Mello, 2008; Schoon & Parsons, 2002). Theoretical and practical knowledge on the formation of career thoughts is an important basis for the development of effective career policy and career guidance practice. If practitioners do not understand the career ideas and needs of secondary school students, they cannot design and implement adequate career guidance programmes.

However, the role of geographical location within the process of career development has largely been over-looked and under-theorised in career literature (Alexander & Hooley, 2018). Little research has been carried out to analyse how the geographical characteristics of small jurisdictions might affect the career perspectives and the decision-making processes of young persons. The majority of career theorists whose work focuses on the initiation and development process of career thoughts and aspirations within early adulthood have concentrated mainly on

the individual, neglecting the setting within which such aspirations are pursued (Alexander & Hooley, 2018). Such conceptions tend to ignore the aspect of geographical location in which careers are shaped, apparently implying that this has little to no impact on an individual's career pathway. Such a representation overlooks physical boundaries as well as the socio-political and bureaucratic barriers that might often prove to be the preeminent cause for unequal opportunities, both in terms of access to employment as well as the chances for career progression (Alexander, 2017).

Indeed, despite great improvements in transport and communication, geography remains a fundamental influence on one's life. Space "is not merely a setting or backdrop, but an agentic player in the game: a force with detectable and independent effects on social life" (Gieryn, 2000, p. 466). Geographical and social characteristics can shape the career opportunities available within different localities in the same country (Reid & Westergaard, 2017). Small territories are not miniature versions of mainland communities: their demographic trends and socioeconomic and political dynamics may provide difficulties, opportunities (Bray, 1990; King, 2009) and also attitudes (Alexander & Hooley, 2018) that are distinct from those of persons living in larger places. Labour markets within small island jurisdictions are characterised by their limitations (Royle, 2010); and it is well known that youths from small and remote regions tend to resort to migration in order to ensure a brighter future for themselves in terms of employment and career prospects (Alexander, 2015; Vodden, Gibson & Baldacchino, 2015). It is apparent that geography plays a critical role in the students' formulation process of vocational ideas and preferences, both in terms of the employment opportunities that exist within their particular labour markets, as well as in terms of setting up the context within which such important decisions are to be taken.

This situation poses a challenge for researchers and theorists in the fields of career development and career guidance. Most career models are based on research conducted on mainland societies, and often "resort to importing, translating, adapting or adopting resources from overseas" (Sultana, 2006, p. 49). These models tend not to address the challenges caused by the socio-political and economic characteristics of small island states (Sultana, 2006).

Thus, this study aims to shed light on the career perspectives of youths residing in the small island state of Malta. The Small Scale Syndrome, a sociological theoretical lens developed by Baldacchino (1997), is operationalised to investigate students' career perspectives in relation to the socio-political, geographical and economic environment in which they live. More precisely, this study aims to examine whether the Small Scale Syndrome can help explain any potential differences in the career perspectives between (1) students residing on the smaller island of Gozo and those residing on the larger island of Malta; and (2) between students with only Maltese citizenship and those with dual or foreign citizenship.

The following section discusses the Small Scale Syndrome, which forms the theoretical basis of this study.

Theoretical context: The Small Scale Syndrome

The Small Scale Syndrome (Baldacchino, 1997) fits well within the structuralist approach of career research; this upholds the notion that the career thoughts and aspirations of young people depend less on choice and more on available opportunities (Roberts, 1997). The Small Scale Syndrome refers to a collection of factors which shed light on the effects that

particular economic, socio-political and demographic aspects may have on the people living in small, often island jurisdictions. The model consists of three theoretically and conceptually divergent, yet operationally entangled factors, namely Totality, Monopoly and Intimacy, and a fourth feature being Emigration, which is the primary and most significant route to escape the aforementioned three (Baldacchino, 1997). The following subsections outline the four factors.

Monopoly

By definition, communities with a small population have only a meagre pool from which to draw and recruit candidates for highly influential positions. The result of such demographic restrictions are referred to as monopolisation, in the sense that economic power and political influence tend to be concentrated within the hands of a single or few individuals, institutions and organisations (Baldacchino & Veenendaal, 2018). Mills (1973) argues that within these settings, the result is often ‘in’ or ‘out’, ‘friend’ or ‘foe’ politics, where there is no pride in being second best; there are only outright winners and losers (also Baldacchino, 1997).

Within a small market which may not sustain a thoroughly competitive system, a handful of companies may flourish and dominate the various economic sectors of a society. Indeed, organisations within a small society may often find themselves offering the only available employment opportunities within a particular sector or industry. Common examples of monopolisation in small jurisdictions include national airlines, national universities, national ferry companies, and national water and electricity suppliers (Briguglio & Buttigieg, 2004). “The advantages of business consolidation and the disadvantages associated with business fragmentation often lead authorities of small states to justify monopolistic and oligopolistic structures” (Briguglio & Buttigieg, 2004, p.11). However, these practices may lead to economic inefficiency, reduced labour mobility, differences in employment conditions and salaries, as well as a strong socio-political dependence on single providers for basic needs (Boto, 2012; Baldacchino & Veenendaal, 2018). The lack of private investment within certain economic sectors is bound to have consequences on job prospects as well as the conditions of work within that particular sector (Briguglio, 2016).

Intimacy

The second defining characteristic of small jurisdictions is Intimacy, which refers to a compact and socially cohesive environment determined by the pervasive personal networks and overlapping role relationships among small state citizens (Lowenthal, 1987). According to Baldacchino (2012b, p. 17), a society becomes intimate when “the threshold of privacy is low, familiarity is excessive, information is power, who you are and who you know is important, and where role multiplicity and overlap are rife and unavoidable”.

Most small state citizens are born and raised within an interdependent system where nearly every relationship serves multiple purposes (Baldacchino, 1997). The ubiquity of multiple role relationships (Ott, 2000) within small states, suggests that professional and private interactions tend to become intertwined, often blurring the boundaries between the two (Baldacchino & Veenendaal, 2018). Citizens of small states and territories tend to have a far-reaching body of information about each other’s personal dealings, political opinions, and group affiliations, but still learn to get along, whether they like or not, knowing that they are

likely to renew and reinforce relationships with the same persons in a variety of different contexts (Baldacchino, 1997).

One manifestation of Intimacy in small states is the greater tendency of encountering pure forms of nepotism (Baldacchino, 1997). Given that people tend to know each other inside out, job descriptions are more likely to be intentionally designed to fit the person for whom the employment opportunity is targeted. Hence, employment recruitment and job advertising may be “a largely ceremonial, perfunctory affair” (Sultana, 2006, p.41). Within the labour domain, personal relationships are often the determining factor in career choice, irrespective of the congruence between one’s personality type and such career opportunity. Sultana (2006) notes the particular relevance to the small state context of the dictum ‘it’s who you know, not what you know’. Indeed, word of mouth is still the most used method of recruitment in Malta (National Commission for Further & Higher Education, Jobsplus & Malta Enterprise, 2016).

Totality

The strong sense of a tightly knit society in small states is often accompanied by an equally persistent presence of the state within every facet of life, such as education, health and employment. Governments and political institutions within small states tend to be particularly powerful. “Ubiquitous and omnipresent, the ramification of the state in small... jurisdictions are extensive and are reminiscent of totalitarian regimes” (Baldacchino & Veenendaal, 2018, p. 344). In microstates, the government in office has an undisputed presence in every significant venture. The presence of the state is accentuated by the relatively low interest or capacity of the private sector, local or foreign, in investing within the local economy. The state’s influence within the labour market may extinguish the few opportunities for the private sector to flourish (Baldacchino & Veenendaal, 2018). The relative lack of a vibrant private sector in many small states means that the livelihood of their inhabitants may often depend on the party in government, which can serve as gatekeeper to public sector careers.

Baldacchino (1997) asserts that the unpleasant experiences of rubbing shoulders with ‘Big Brother’ are replicated with respect to other relationships within social institutions, enterprises and even with other discrete individuals. Relationships in small-scale settings tend to be weighty, can easily exceed role-specificity, and are bound to extend over one’s whole lifetime (Baldacchino, 1997). Information is rarely confidential, as it travels quickly by word of mouth (Singham, 1968). Opportunities for information misuse and abuse are plentiful via close friendship networks resulting from role multiplicity of political and social incumbents. As Baldacchino (1997) asserts, personal qualities within the small-scale society – such as family background, political affiliations and personal relationships – may overpower impersonal, legal, rational and universalistic attributes, such as qualifications, skills and training.

Emigration

The clannish environment of island life, the uphill battle of determining your own path and the social capital that comes from close relatives may be simply too stifling, especially for those career-oriented citizens who constantly seek fresh pastures (Baldacchino, 1997). If the experience of totality, intimacy and monopoly becomes unbearable, escape is only possible through emigration. Apart from the factors pushing people out of their small society, larger societies might also tempt individuals to leave their families and close relatives behind, in order

to seek a better future elsewhere. Greater economic and employment possibilities abroad, political freedom, the alluring city lights of the cosmopolitan society, pull people away from small societies (Van Hear, Bakewell, & Long, 2017). Inhabitants who would like to further their studies in higher institutions and the young and skilled workers are constantly lured to better career opportunities and employment prospects in metropolitan cities (Khonje, 2015). Youth raised in small societies who move to larger societies for education purposes, discover on their return that what was once a home now seems transformed into a suffocating environment. Low salaries, lack of social facilities and a shortage of opportunities for progression and career advancement may be too much to bear (Bray, 1990), hence, migration takes on the character of a voluntary exile (Baldacchino, 1997).

All too often, small communities experience high levels of out-migration. Indeed, 18 of the 20 countries experiencing the highest levels of emigration around the world are small states (Docquier & Marfouk, 2004). It is not surprising that sustainability, especially when it comes to maintaining an adequate working population, is often a delicate matter within small states (Alexander, 2016). Emigration might lead to severely problematic situations, including greater difficulties to sustain the required range and quality of services.

It is hypothesised that the above-mentioned realities and experiences are internalised by students living in small communities, affecting their career thoughts, aspirations and plans. Their view of their world affects their view of their careers.

Having examined the four dimensions that provide the theoretical lens of the current study, the following section focuses on the country of Malta, the geographic context in which this study takes place.

Geographic context: The country of Malta

The country of Malta is a Southern European archipelago, located in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea. With a population of approximately 475,000 over an area of 316 km², it is the world's 10th smallest country by land area. The archipelago consists of two main islands separated by an 8km channel, Malta and Gozo, and a few other smaller islets. Unless otherwise stated, the terms 'Malta' and 'Maltese' in this study refer to the island of Malta only, excluding Gozo. "In recent years, [the country of] Malta has become synonymous with strong economic growth, low unemployment rates, a budget surplus and an expanding services sector" (Eurofound, 2019). The country emerged relatively unscathed from the international economic recession of the late 2000s and early 2010s thanks to its diversified economy and ability to adapt quickly to economic challenges and opportunities. A variety of factors such as EU membership, geographical location, political stability, favourable legal frameworks, tax incentives, robust communications infrastructure and a skilled multi-lingual workforce, have facilitated the current economic expansion. Tourism, a traditionally important contributor to the country's economy, benefitted from better connections through low cost carriers and the growth of the cruise liner industry. Financial services and on-line gaming have grown exponentially. The government has recently started promoting other potentially lucrative sectors such as distributed ledger technologies/Blockchain and medical cannabis. The construction sector is flourishing due to the substantial EU funds invested to improve the country's road infrastructure and the booming construction of dwellings required to accommodate the unprecedented influx of foreign workers. And, although over the years Malta

experienced an overall decline in its manufacturing industry, the sector still contributes to around 10% of the country's GDP (Malta Enterprise, 2019), especially through high value added and 'high tech' subsectors such as the production of microchips and generic pharmaceuticals. The state's revenue has also been significantly boosted of late through a controversial Individual Investor Programme (IIP) through which wealthy foreign individuals can purchase Maltese (and, by default, EU) citizenship (Ministry for Finance, 2018).

Most of the above-mentioned economic activity takes place on the main island of Malta. Indeed, whereas in recent years the island of Malta has witnessed significant increases in its inhabitants, the number of persons living in Gozo has remained relatively stable. With a population of approximately 31,000 registered residents and the size of about a third of Malta, Gozo enjoys a more rural landscape and a tightly knit society. Despite the fact that the two islands are geographically compact, the distinctive economic and socio-political characteristics of the two islands play a significant role in the lives of their inhabitants. The specific challenges that Gozitans face are in part due to Gozo's dependence on the larger island of Malta. Such 'double insularity' is the preeminent cause for the lack of educational and employment opportunities (Mercieca, 2011). Furthermore, this geographic disadvantage has far-reaching repercussions on the island's social and economic sustainability (Camilleri, 2019). As a result of the geographic and logistical barriers, the island of Gozo lacks a vibrant private sector. Thus, a significant proportion of occupations are within or connected directly to public institutions. Indeed, 39% of workers in Gozo are employed in the public sector, compared to 21% of workers in Malta (National Statistics Office, NSO, 2019b). Due to the low presence of the private sector, the average salary in Gozo is considerably less than that in Malta (Briguglio, 2016). GDP per capita in Gozo in 2017 was €14,466, significantly lower than the €24,394 in Malta (NSO, 2019b).

The two islands share the same public education system and all students in primary and secondary schools follow the same curricula and are offered similar career education and guidance. Within the country's public education framework, career guidance is provided through a mixed model approach (Sultana, 2018). It is primarily delivered through the implementation of various curricular and extra-curricular activities, supported by qualified career advisors. Furthermore, primary and secondary school students receive career education lessons which are incorporated in a timetabled subject called Personal, Social and Career Development (PSCD) (Sultana, 2018). Both Maltese and Gozitan secondary school students face a dynamic, competitive and complex labour market (Debono, Camilleri, Galea, & Gravina, 2007). However, Gozitans face the added difficulty of having to decide whether or not to consider studying and working in Malta, which would boost their career opportunities but also increase challenges and expenses relating to commuting and renting property on the mainland.

Whereas many small jurisdictions are conventionally viewed as "isolated, immobile and homogenous" (Bernardie-Tahir & Schmoll, 2014), the country of Malta is passing through an unprecedented period of demographic change. For most of its recent history, this country was characterised by emigration. Between 1946 and 1976, due to the rapid increase of its population coupled by a lack of employment prospects at home, it facilitated the emigration of some 140,000 of its population (King & Strachan, 1980). However, over the last 40 years, as the country's economy started expanding, the reverse phenomenon of return migration gathered pace. While no official statistics exist about its overall magnitude, the reality of returned migrants is apparent in many aspects of social life. Data for recent years shows a much larger ratio of Maltese nationals returning to rather than emigrating out of the country. For example,

the number of Maltese return migrants in 2018 reached 1,579 and exceeded those departing by 44% (NSO, 2019c).

In recent years, the booming of Malta's economy resulted in a large demand for human resources. The country started attracting increasing numbers of foreign workers and rapidly became a country of immigration for the first time in its recent history. Indeed, population growth in recent years has been mainly due to immigration. Whereas in 2000, about 1% of all workers in Malta were foreigners (Central Bank of Malta, 2016), the figure grew exponentially to about a fifth in 2019 (Debono & Vassallo, 2019). This demographic change has also found its way in Maltese schools. The population of foreign students in the country's compulsory school system has more than doubled between the academic years 2012/2013 and 2016/2017 (Micallef, 2018).

This brief analysis of the context of the study frames the evolving demographic and socio-economic realities within the country of Malta. A clearer understanding of the students' career perspectives based on their differing experiences (stemming from where they live and where they come from) could lead to more targeted and effective career guidance services and reduce labour market friction.

Research methodology

Aim, hypotheses and research design

This study aims to shed light on career perspectives and the formation of career aspirations of students in Gozo and Malta, and on students with Maltese and foreign citizenship through the lens of the Small Scale Syndrome (Baldacchino & Veenendaal, 2018). The following two hypotheses are investigated.

Due to the size of the country of Malta, young persons living on both islands of Malta and Gozo might experience symptoms relating to the Small Scale Syndrome. However, in view of the circumstances discussed in the previous section, it is hypothesised that those living in Gozo feel Monopoly, Intimacy, Totality and Emigration to a greater extent than their peers in Malta. Since small societies are often characterised by monopolised markets and a lack of a vibrant private sector, Gozitan students may be more conscious of the lack of employment opportunities and lower salaries on their island when compared to their Maltese counterparts (Monopoly). As was discussed earlier, in small island societies, the importance of who you know outweighs the importance of what you know. Thus, having the right connections and a good relationship with the right people might be considered as critical factors determining one's career outcomes in Gozo more than in Malta (Intimacy). As a disproportionate amount of employment opportunities in small places like Gozo are directly linked to the public sector, Gozitan students are perhaps more likely to be conscious of their dependency on the government and politicians for a successful career (Totality). The restrictive and potentially claustrophobic experiences of living in a small island like Gozo may also be more likely to lead Gozitan students to aspire to migrate when compared to their peers living in Malta (Emigration). Thus, Hypothesis 1 is:

Gozitan students experience the Small Scale Syndrome more keenly than their Maltese peers.

The Small Scale Syndrome suggests that living in a small (often island) state may subject individuals, including students, to particular experiences that shape their attitudes and behaviours in ways that are different from those living in larger countries. Students with foreign citizenship normally have one or both parents who are not Maltese. Such students are likely to be born abroad and might not have gone through the whole Maltese formal educational system. It is assumed that most of these foreign citizens come from larger countries and that they did not experience the Small Scale Syndrome in their country of origin. Due to their potentially different cultural background and life path, it is also assumed that students with foreign citizenship might not have assimilated the Small Scale Syndrome to the same extent. Thus, Hypothesis 2 is:

Students with Maltese nationality experience the Small Scale Syndrome more keenly than their peers with dual or foreign nationality

A quantitative approach was adopted to answer such hypotheses. This approach enabled the researchers to determine the nature of the various relationships that might exist between specific variables, and allowed the researchers to understand the trends among the population upon which the study was conducted.

Research tool

A questionnaire was developed in both English and Maltese to gather the necessary data. The questionnaire included items about the students' socio-demographic characteristics, career perspectives and aspirations, and perceived employment opportunities. The structure and battery of items were designed to reflect Baldacchino's (1997) description of the tenets of the Small Scale Syndrome. A list of statements was generated to reflect the four aspects of Monopoly, Intimacy, Totality and Emigration. As the questionnaire was meant to be distributed among young students, an effort was made to keep the number of items per aspect small in order to increase the response rate and the likelihood of accurate answers (Bryman, 2012). Thus, four items were developed for each of the four Small Scale Syndrome aspects (16 items in total). A simple three-point scale (disagree, unsure, agree) was adopted to answer each item. A factor analysis was carried out on the survey results to examine the extent to which different items tended to go together. This produced three strong factors, one for Monopoly, another for Emigration, and a third one comprising items of Intimacy and Totality. The latter factor indicates that the items developed for Intimacy and Totality were not conceptually distinct. The questionnaire items were also subjected to the Cronbach's alpha test of internal reliability which indicated the need to amend the number of items in the analysis. Table 1 below shows the final list of ten items. While the Cronbach's alpha values of 0.5 are on the low side (indicating a rather weak relation of the items to each other), they may be acceptable in the early stages of research (Nunnally, 1978). The heterogeneity of the limited number of items which attempted to cover the breadth of each of the examined aspects affected the reliability scores (Rammstedt & Beierlein, 2014).

Table 1: Items Representing Aspects of the Small Scale Syndrome.

	Cronbach's Alpha
Monopoly	0.535
Employment opportunities on my island are scarce	
My expected future salary will be less if I don't seek work outside my island	
Salaries and conditions of work differ between Malta and Gozo	
Intimacy/Totality	0.528
Who you know is more important than what you know	
Having a good relationship with a politician would increase my work opportunities	
My work opportunities will be affected by which political party is in government	
Emigration	0.510
My parents encourage me to pursue a career abroad	
Knowing a foreign language is important for me to increase work opportunities abroad	
I may consider changing my career aspiration as long as I work on my island (R)	
Students should be informed about employment opportunities abroad	

Population and sample

This study targeted students attending a state secondary school in Gozo and another one in Malta. The two schools were chosen because of their similar student catchment areas: rural environments which presumably affect the culture and lifestyle of their inhabitants. The two schools also had comparable sizes of student populations and similar ratios of migrant students. Two different cohorts of students within each selected school were invited to participate within this study: Year 9 and Year 11 students. Most students were between 13 and 16 years old.

As illustrated in [Table 2](#), the respondent sample comprised of 49.5% of the total population of Year 9 and Year 11 students in both schools A and B. 46.5% of the participants were male, while 53.5% were female. The majority of respondents, 58.6%, were Year 11 students, while 41.4% attended Year 9. 80.6% of the respondents had only Maltese Citizenship, whereas 19.4% had dual or foreign citizenship.

Table 2: Student Population and Sample.

Name of School	Year Group	Population	Sample Size	Percentage
Gozo - School A	Year 9	171	79	48.5
Gozo - School A	Year 11	192	140	72.9
Malta - School B	Year 9	147	54	36.7
Malta - School B	Year 11	138	48	34.8
Total		648	321	49.5

Note: The student population data was provided by the respective schools.

Procedure

Once the study was approved by the relevant authorities, the questionnaire was piloted with eight students, consisting of two students from each Form at each school. This exercise led to amendments meant to clarify the meaning of some words.

The questionnaire was distributed in School A in hard copy during January 2019. The participants were chosen on the basis of convenience. Here, parent information letters and consent forms were distributed by the PSCD teacher. Once the students returned the signed consent form, the teacher gave them a questionnaire and an information letter. The questionnaire was filled in during a PSCD lesson and was later collected by the PSCD teacher. Within School B, questionnaires and information letters (for students and parents), as well as parent consent forms, were handed out during a morning assembly. Students were asked to leave completed documents in two separate boxes (one for the filled questionnaires and one for the consent forms) located in the School Foyer. Full anonymity was thus assured. Quantitative data from questionnaires was inputted into IBM SPSS Statistics 25 Software and was analysed through both descriptive and inferential statistics.

Findings

The findings are presented in three subsections. The first displays the correlation between the three dimensions of Monopoly, Intimacy/Totality, and Emigration. The second compares students in Gozo and Malta on their experiences of such dimensions. The third compares the experiences of respondents with only Maltese citizenship (henceforth described as ‘Maltese citizens’) to those with dual or foreign citizenship. Each of the second and third subsections starts by outlining the results according to the general dimensions and subsequently examines the results of individual items within each dimension.

Relation between Monopoly, Intimacy/Totality and Emigration

Relations between the dimensions of Monopoly, Intimacy/Totality and Emigration were tested through a Pearson Product-Moment correlation: this revealed significant but weak correlations in terms of the effect size (or strength of the relationship) between all the variables (see Table 3). Monopoly is *positively* correlated with Intimacy/Totality ($r=0.160$, $N=311$, $p<.01$, two-tailed) and Emigration ($r=0.176$, $N=308$, $p<.01$, two-tailed). In other words, students with a higher level of awareness of Monopoly are also likely to score higher on Intimacy/Totality, and are more likely to express an intention to emigrate. Intimacy/Totality is *negatively* correlated with Emigration ($r=-0.120$, $N=312$, $p<.05$, two-tailed). Thus, students who accept a higher level of Intimacy/Totality express lower intentions to emigrate.

Table 3: Pearson Correlations of Monopoly, Intimacy/Totality and Emigration.

	1	2	3
1. Monopoly	/		
2. Intimacy/Totality	0.160**	/	
3. Emigration	0.176**	-0.120*	/

Note: * = $p<.05$; ** = $p<.01$; *** = $p<.001$

Gozitan versus Maltese respondents

An Independent Samples T-test indicated that the Gozitan respondents are significantly more aware of Monopoly when compared to their Maltese peers ($t=7.187$, $df=312$, $p<.001$). Gozitan respondents also score higher on Intimacy/Totality and Emigration when compared to Maltese respondents, but the differences are not statistically significant (see [Table 4](#)).

Table 4: Independent Samples t-Test of Small Scale Syndrome with Locality.

	Locality	N	Mean	Mean Difference	T	Df
Monopoly	Gozo	214	7.24	1.30	7.187***	312
	Malta	100	5.94			
Intimacy/Totality	Gozo	217	6.26	0.27	1.249	170.191
	Malta	101	5.99			
Emigration	Gozo	214	9.43	0.16	0.657	151.800
	Malta	100	9.27			

Note: * = $p<.05$; ** = $p<.01$; *** = $p<.001$

When examining the individual components of the variable Monopoly, a Mann-Whitney Test indicated that Gozitan respondents are significantly more likely to believe that work opportunities on their small island are scarce when compared to Maltese respondents ($U=6171$, $N_1=219$, $N_2=102$, $p<.001$) (see [Table 5](#)). Similarly, Gozitan respondents are significantly more likely to believe that there are differences in salaries and working conditions between Malta and Gozo ($U=6803$, $N_1=215$, $N_2=100$, $p<.001$).

Table 5: Mann-Whitney U-Test of Individual Small Scale Syndrome Items with Locality.

		Island	N	Mean Rank	U
Monopoly	Employment opportunities on my island are scarce	Gozo	219	183.82	6171***
		Malta	102	112.00	
	My expected future salary will be less if I don't seek work outside my island	Gozo	218	165.55	10017
		Malta	102	149.71	
	Salaries and conditions of work differ between Malta and Gozo	Gozo	215	176.36	6803***
		Malta	100	118.53	
Intimacy/ Totality	Who you know is more important than what you know	Gozo	218	162.91	10374
		Malta	101	153.72	
	Having a good relationship with a politician would increase my work opportunities	Gozo	219	163.71	10575
		Malta	102	155.18	
	My work opportunities will be affected by which political party is in government	Gozo	218	164.04	10347
		Malta	102	152.94	
Emigration	My parents encourage me to pursue a career abroad	Malta	216	161.66	10334
		Gozo	101	153.32	
	Knowing a foreign language is important for me to increase work opportunities abroad	Malta	218	159.76	10957
		Gozo	102	162.08	
	I may consider changing my career aspiration as long as I work on my island (R)	Malta	218	161.98	10795
		Gozo	102	157.33	
	Students should be informed about employment opportunities abroad	Malta	219	161.57	10826
		Gozo	101	158.18	

Note: * = $p<.05$; ** = $p<.01$; *** = $p<.001$

Maltese citizens versus dual or foreign citizens

As shown in Table 6, Maltese citizens and respondents with dual or foreign citizenship have relatively similar levels of awareness of Monopoly ($t=0.589$, $df=311$, $p>.05$). However, Maltese citizens are more likely to experience feelings of Intimacy/Totality when compared to their peers ($t=3.322$, $df=114.519$, $p<.01$). On the other hand, students with dual or foreign citizenship are more likely to intend to Emigrate than those with Maltese citizenship ($t=-5.321$, $df=112.04$, $p<.001$).

Table 6: Independent Samples t-Test of Small Scale Syndrome with Citizenship.

	Citizenship	N	Mean	Mean Difference	T	Df
Monopoly	Only Maltese citizenship	252	6.86	0.16	0.589	311
	Dual or foreign citizenship	61	6.72			
Intimacy/Totality	Only Maltese citizenship	255	6.31	0.68	3.322**	114.519
	Dual or foreign citizenship	62	5.63			
Emigration	Only Maltese citizenship	254	9.16	-1.16	-5.321***	112.042
	Dual or foreign citizenship	59	10.32			

Note: * = $p<.05$; ** = $p<.01$; *** = $p<.001$

Table 7: Mann-Whitney U-Test of Individual Small Scale Syndrome Items with Citizenship.

			N	Mean Rank	U
Monopoly	Employment opportunities on my island are scarce	Mt	258	163.30	7275
		Other	62	148.83	
	My expected future salary will be less if I don't seek work outside my island	Mt	257	160.59	7815
		Other	62	157.55	
	Salaries and conditions of work differ between Malta and Gozo	Mt	253	157.18	7635
		Other	61	158.83	
Intimacy/Totality	Who you know is more important than what you know	Mt	256	165.69	6351*
		Other	62	133.94	
	Having a good relationship with a politician would increase my work opportunities	Mt	258	164.03	7088
		Other	62	145.81	
	My work opportunities will be affected by which political party is in government	Mt	257	164.96	6694*
		Other	62	139.46	
Emigration	My parents encourage me to pursue a career abroad	Mt	254	149.55	5600***
		Other	62	195.18	
	Knowing a foreign language is important for me to increase work opportunities abroad	Mt	258	154.86	6542**
		Other	61	181.75	
	I may consider changing my career aspiration, as long as I work on my island (R)	Mt	258	154.52	6456*
		Other	61	183.16	
	Students should be informed about work opportunities abroad	Mt	258	155.93	6818*
		Other	61	177.23	

Note: * = $p<.05$; ** = $p<.01$; *** = $p<.001$; mt= only Maltese citizenship; Other= dual or foreign citizenship

Table 7 shows the differences between the two groups on the individual items of the three examined dimensions. With regards to the dimension of Intimacy/Totality, respondents with Maltese citizenship are significantly more likely than their peers to believe that who you know is more important than what you know ($U=6351$, $N_1=256$, $N_2=62$, $p<.05$). They are also more likely to believe that their employment opportunities will be affected by which political party is in government ($U=6694$, $N_1=257$, $N_2=62$, $p<.05$).

On the other hand, respondents with dual or foreign citizenship score significantly higher than Maltese nationals on all items indicating propensity to consider Emigration. Their parents are more likely to urge them to pursue a career abroad ($U=5600$, $N_1=254$, $N_2=62$, $p<.001$). They are more likely to believe that mastering a foreign language would increase their employment options abroad ($U=6542$, $N_1=258$, $N_2=61$, $p<.01$). Respondents with dual or foreign citizenship are less likely to consider changing their career aspiration to pursue employment on the island where they currently live ($U=6456$, $N_1=258$, $N_2=61$, $p<.05$). Besides, they more strongly believe that students should be informed about employment opportunities abroad ($U=6818$, $N_1=258$, $N_2=61$, $p<.05$).

Analysis and discussion

This section discusses the findings related to the two hypotheses of this study.

Hypothesis 1: Gozitan students experience the Small Scale Syndrome more keenly than their Maltese peers

This study suggests that significant differences in perceptions exist between the Maltese and Gozitan respondents only with regards to Monopoly. Gozitan respondents did show somewhat higher propensity towards Intimacy/Totality and Emigration, but such differences are not statistically relevant.

Monopoly

This research suggests that Gozitan students experience the effects of Monopoly more than their Maltese counterparts. This difference suggests that young Gozitans are more keenly aware of the disadvantages associated with their island: given its small geographic and population size, it offers less attractive career opportunities and working conditions. A limited geographical area accompanied by meagre opportunities for employment may bring with it an assortment of unintended effects, such as the lack of innovation, a shortage of technological advancement and stagnant employment conditions (Baldacchino, 1997). Gozitan youths appear to be sensitised to the fact that salaries and conditions of work on their island are impacted by their geographical condition. Most Gozitan students probably know people, including close relatives, who emigrated, moved permanently to Malta, or who commute daily to Malta to work (Pace, 2018). This finding is in line with Magro (2007) who points out that the absolute majority of Gozitan students do not believe that there are enough job opportunities in Gozo.

Such experiences appear not to be shared by Maltese students. Few people from Malta commute to Gozo for employment purposes (NSO, 2019a), and while the current study did not directly investigate this aspect, it is safe to assume that Maltese students are unlikely to consider relocating to Gozo for work. Thus, most of these students might have never thought of

comparing the conditions of work between the two islands and are not aware of the relatively bleak labour market realities existing in Gozo. Maltese students tend to be aware of the positive economic situation of Malta and few believe that employment opportunities are scarce on their island. Though to a lesser degree than their Gozitan peers, many Maltese respondents nevertheless still believe that certain elements of Monopoly may affect their future conditions of work. Many believe that, while Malta offers a wider array of job opportunities than Gozo, these are inevitably more limited than the opportunities available in larger and economically developed countries. This realisation is correlated with the intention of emigrating in search of better opportunities outside the country. On the other hand, some other students may curtail their aspirations in order to remain living on their island, in line with Gottfredson's (2005) theory of circumscription and compromise.

Intimacy/ Totality

There are no significant differences between Maltese and Gozitan respondents on the dimension of Intimacy/ Totality, which also yields lower scores than Monopoly. This finding might indicate the different nature of the two examined dimensions. The similarity between Maltese and Gozitan respondents on the assimilation of Intimacy/ Totality may imply that the influences on this dimension go beyond geographic size and economic strength, which appear to characterise Monopoly. Such similarity may stem from comparable (if not identical) socio-political and educational experiences. While the two groups of students live on different islands, they both reside in rather rural environments with lower population density and more traditional culture and lifestyles. The particular social dynamics in which the two groups of students live might shape social interactions, political life and employment expectations. Since inhabitants of small states tend to have a far-reaching body of tacit knowledge about each other, interpersonal relationships are considered critical elements within the political sphere. The respondents are aware of the importance of relationships, including political ones, in order to boost future employment opportunities. The rather similar perceptions of both Maltese and Gozitan students appear to confirm that personal qualities within the small island society – such as loyalty, family background and political affiliation – may override impersonal, legal, rational and universalistic attributes (Baldacchino, 1997).

Emigration

Citizens in small states may be tempted to leave behind their families and close relatives and seek a better future elsewhere. Contrary to the scores on Intimacy/ Totality, overall, respondents score high on their intention to emigrate. Unexpectedly, there is no significant difference between Gozitan and Maltese students on this dimension. Indeed, despite the geographic and economic disparities between the islands, both groups of students appear to share the same perspectives. This result suggests that both Malta and Gozo are perceived by their inhabitants to be small and limited when compared to the possibilities that current young students might aspire for.

Employment conditions and opportunities for career progression and mobility are all aspects which may determine the likelihood to emigrate. It is also worth noting that students who are more aware of Monopoly are more likely to express an intention to emigrate. This finding supports the view that the perceived limited economic and employment possibilities within the small state and a perceived promise of economic gain abroad are factors that may induce the intention to emigrate (Verwiebe, Mau, Seidel, & Kathmann, 2010).

It has been noted that, while Gozitan students would consider working in Malta or abroad if need be, the majority would prefer to work in Gozo (Debono, 2006). The fact that Gozitan students within the current study score high on their intention to move out of their island, indicates a possible shift in the students' mentality over recent years. Gozitan students might have become more open to experience and more outward looking.

Hypothesis 2: Students with Maltese nationality experience the Small Scale Syndrome more keenly than their peers with dual or foreign nationality.

Significant differences between students who have Maltese citizenship and those who have either dual or foreign citizenship emerged in terms of Intimacy/ Totality and Emigration.

Intimacy/ Totality

Maltese citizens show higher levels of assimilation of social Intimacy/ Totality when compared to their peers with either dual or foreign citizenship. The former may have better integrated the social Intimacy/ Totality perspective through the influence of their immediate family and the greater probability of having resided all or most of their lives in Malta or Gozo. A critical difference between the two groups comes across with regards to the item 'who you know is more important than what you know' which is a key marker of tightly knit social relations (Baldacchino, 2012b; Sultana, 2006). The respondents with Maltese citizenship are also more likely to acknowledge that their careers may be affected by politics. This finding should be interpreted in relation to the fact that a large proportion of such respondents aspire for employment in the public sector, perhaps in pursuit of security, which was highlighted by Zammit (1994) as a main value in traditional Maltese society. On the other hand, the relatively low assimilation of Intimacy/ Totality by respondents with dual or foreign nationality may partly derive from and contribute towards their greater propensity to consider emigrating.

Emigration

Respondents with either dual or foreign citizenship score considerably higher on the intention to emigrate when compared to their peers with Maltese citizenship. A number of reasons might contribute to this finding, including the students' background and their upbringing. Students with dual or foreign nationality might find the experience of living in a small country more stifling than the locals. They are also more likely to be encouraged by their parents to consider embarking on a career abroad. They might encounter less bureaucratic and legal barriers if they were to seek employment elsewhere (Harpaz, 2019). If they migrate to a non-EU country in which they are citizens, they would have the legal right to work, something that Maltese citizens would not automatically have. These students might also have more social resources abroad, such as close relatives or family friends. Students with dual or foreign citizenship might also not have integrated fully within the Maltese culture and society, hence, if given the chance, they might prefer to settle abroad. Furthermore, some of the respondents with dual or foreign citizenship might have moved to (the country of) Malta only for a temporary period, and they intend to move on or return to their country of origin once that period expires. On the other hand, respondents with Maltese citizenship, might have more to lose if they were to emigrate in the future. For example, their families might have more material assets or close relatives in this country. Hence, it would be more challenging for them to

migrate to another country for employment or educational purposes. Most of the above reasons put forward to explain the differences in the intention to emigrate on the basis of citizenship fall neatly within the network theory (Mabogunje, 1970) or the social capital approach (Garip, 2008) which view migration in relation to the broader social environment, and Fischer, Martin and Straubhaar's (1997) idea of immobility based on insider accumulated advantages.

Monopoly

In contrast to the previous findings, students with Maltese citizenship and their peers with dual or foreign citizenship exhibit similar levels of awareness regarding Monopoly. It appears that foreign students assimilated this dimension more than the dimension of Intimacy/ Totality. The fact that Monopoly is more related to geographic size and economic strength than the other dimensions might make it more obvious and easy to integrate in one's perspective of life, irrespective of citizenship status.

Conclusion

This study represents an attempt to operationalise the model of the Small Scale Syndrome (Baldacchino, 1997) and use it to investigate career perspectives of students living in a small state.

Baldacchino (1997, p. 67) claims that the four principles of the Small Scale syndrome are "theoretically and conceptually divergent, yet operationally entangled". Indeed, the survey questions developed in this study were unable to distinguish between Intimacy and Totality. This may be due to weaknesses deriving from the type and number of survey items that were developed in this study, though it may also indicate the need to refine the two dimensions conceptually. Notwithstanding this aspect and in line with Baldacchino's claim, the examined dimensions (Monopoly, Intimacy/ Totality, and Emigration) are significantly correlated to each other, while the strength of such relationships tends to be weak. For instance and as expected, high awareness of Monopoly and rejection of Intimacy/ Totality were found to be related to an increased likelihood of Emigration.

This study indicates that the dimensions of Monopoly, Intimacy/ Totality and Emigration are able to explain some career perspectives of students living in this small state, distinguishing between students living on the islands of Malta and Gozo, and between students with only Maltese citizenship and those with dual or foreign citizenship. In particular, students living in Gozo are more acutely aware of the limitations deriving from the dimension of Monopoly when compared to their peers living in Malta. On the other hand, students with Maltese citizenship only are more likely than those with dual or foreign citizenship to have assimilated some elements of Intimacy/ Totality. They seem to have accepted more the 'rules of the game' of developing one's career in a small state. On the other hand (and probably partly due to such a situation), students with dual or foreign citizenship are more prone to consider emigrating than their peers.

Overall, the potential influence of the Small Scale Syndrome on students' career perspectives is more apparent across citizenship than locality of residence. These results might have been influenced by the fact that the examined groups of Gozitan and Maltese students live in societies that are more similar to each other than expected. Besides, dual nationality or foreign citizens might have not fully assimilated the mentality and culture of their Maltese

peers. This finding highlights the need for a nuanced approach when using a model like the Small Scale Syndrome which links thoughts and behaviour to geography in line with a rather rigid structuralist approach. The so-called syndrome might be affected by the level of social integration of the individuals under consideration. In our case, students who have stronger ties with foreign countries respond differently to the Small Scale Syndrome than their peers.

This study also suggests that the root cause of monopoly may be somewhat different from those of Intimacy/ Totality and Emigration. Contrary to the other dimensions, Monopoly might be mostly influenced by the geographic and economic features of the particular locality, which in this study vary considerably between the islands of Gozo and Malta. Hence, the obvious economic and geographical differences might have led to noticeable effects upon the career perspectives of the students. On the other hand, the other dimensions of Intimacy/ Totality and Emigration might be influenced more by socio-political and educational factors which tend to be shared between the two groups of students. The different nature of Monopoly when compared to Intimacy/ Totality and Emigration is also apparent when students with Maltese citizenship are compared to those with dual or foreign citizenship. In general, the latter appear to have assimilated Monopoly more than the other dimensions. Perhaps, the assimilation of Intimacy/ Totality requires more time than awareness of Monopoly to be integrated in one's attitudes, or perhaps Intimacy/ Totality can never be integrated well by persons with dual or foreign citizenship.

The authors acknowledge the limitations of this study stemming from both the variables developed to represent the Small Scale Syndrome dimensions and the sample chosen. Further research on the relationship between this syndrome and career perspectives could verify and further delineate the current findings, better informing the study of careers in small states and territories. In particular, it would be useful to develop and test a more accurate and comprehensive inventory to assess the Small Scale Syndrome. Secondly, other quantitative studies could be carried out to examine the career thoughts and aspirations of students from rural and urban catchment areas, perhaps following different educational regimes. This might result in stronger differences between the groups than the current study, since the latter featured the perspectives of Gozitan and Maltese students originating from catchment areas with similar social and educational features. Extending an analogous study to cover other small jurisdictions is another attractive possibility.

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